

VZCZCXRO0175
RR RUEHCI
DE RUEHKA #1011/01 1710139
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 200139Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4360
INFO RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9143
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7976
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1703
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9981
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0799

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 001011

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/20/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FAREWELL CALL ON FOREIGN ADVISER

REF: A. DHAKA 0955

[1](#)B. DHAKA 0951

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia Butenis, reason para 1.4 d.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: During the Ambassador,s June 18 farewell call on Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftikar Chowdhury, the two discussed human rights (including GOB efforts to address those associated with the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)), challenges facing the government, the ongoing corruption cases (including one involving an Amcit), US - Bangladesh relations, and the Foreign Adviser,s views on India. The Foreign Adviser was accompanied by MFA Americas and Pacific Director General Shahidul Islam as notetaker. The DCM served as notetaker for the Ambassador. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) BILATERAL ISSUES: The Ambassador said the US supports the Government of Bangladesh and remains a key partner on issues from avian influenza to counterterrorism. We do, however, follow the situation closely. She stressed the importance of a roadmap for elections, noting that comments the election might not take place by the end of 2008 attributed to the outspoken law adviser, Mainul Hosssain, create confusion about the intentions of the Government. Visibly embarrassed, Chowdhury said Hossain,s comments do not reflect the government's position.

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador confirmed that no one has been named yet to replace her, and the Congressional schedule and summer recess suggest the next opportunity for hearings will come in the fall. She said the DCM would be Charge d,Affaires, a.i. until the arrival of the new Ambassador. Chowdhury announced that Ambassador-designate Humayun Kabir is expected to arrive in Washington by the end of July. He thanked the Ambassador for her work in Bangladesh, noting that her tenure had occurred at a very difficult and sensitive time politically.

[1](#)4. (C) HUMAN RIGHTS, ARRESTS: The Ambassador repeated our message on human rights, saying we follow human rights closely. and expect due process and transparency for those in government custody. In addition, in the case of case of arrested Amcit Abdul Awal Mintoo (ref a), we have a consular obligation to press for information on why he is being held and to ensure that any charges filed against him have a solid legal basis. Chowdhury described the Mintoo arrest as a "big case," adding that his well-connected family is pursuing his case directly with senior government officials.

[1](#)5. (C) Chowdhury said his government has informed security branches it cannot tolerate "anything that appears to be a breach of human rights." In the Choilesh Ritchil case (ref b), he confided the military's initial administrative inquiry was unsatisfactory. Ritchil,s body has been exhumed, and a judicial inquiry is underway.

¶16. (C) The Ambassador explained that US legislation (Leahy) prevents us from including anyone who has served in the paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion RAB in USG-sponsored training. The growing numbers of military officers rotating through RAB, coupled with the military's refusal to refrain from nominating RAB alumni, jeopardize the future viability of important programs like IMET. Chowdhury took the point, while remarking that the RAB "created by the last government to reverse rising crime" no longer has a real reason to exist. He added that "there is no justification for crossfires" -- extra-judicial killings. He assured the Ambassador that a) the RAB has been instructed to investigate and punish those engaged in human rights abuses; b) the number of crossfire deaths is down; c) the same approach is being used in the investigation into PKO abuses in Congo and d) this involves changing the culture of the nation.

¶17. (C) LOOKING AHEAD: Chowdhury predicted the Government's reform efforts will culminate in full-fledged pre-election political activity by the summer of 2008. He sees a role for a party to represent the "middle class, pro-market and secularish" population, and opined that the next government would be a coalition of several parties. He dismissed the military's need for an exit strategy, claiming they are only engaged in a very limited way. He described the military as the best-trained and disciplined section of the middle class, applauding their current role. As for the future of the two ladies, he predicted the corruption cases against them will go forward.

¶18. (C) INDIA: Chowdhury said that the upcoming Foreign Secretary level talks will focus on defining the bilateral

SIPDIS

agenda for the next year. While Bangladesh would not tolerate a terrorist presence in Bangladesh, it cannot accept the

DHAKA 00001011 002 OF 002

Indian request for "hot pursuit" against Indian insurgents allegedly present in Bangladesh. (Comment: The Indian High Commission in Dhaka tells us that New Delhi's bilateral litmus test for the Bangladesh government is its performance on trans-border terrorist issues, but we were unaware that India might be asking for "hot pursuit," or a Bhutan-like approach, for the northeast Indian insurgents that allegedly use Bangladesh as a sanctuary. End Comment.)
BUTENIS